

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 14879

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING: UPDATED
ASSESSMENT

FOR STOESSEL FROM CHARGE

REF: A. STATE 231853; B. MOSCOW 12397

FOLLOWING IS MY UPDATED ASSESSMENT OF U.S.-SOVIET
RELATIONS, TAKING ACCOUNT OF MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS PER
REF A. ORIGINAL ASSESSMENT WAS TRANSMITTED BY REF B.

1. THE OUTLOOK FOR A REALTIVELY STABLE AND USEFUL
RELATIONSHIP IS MORE HOPEFUL THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE THE
END OF WORLD WAR II. BUT THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS ILLUS-
TRATES ONE OF SEVERAL POTENTIAL PITFALLS.

2. HAVING ACHIEVED ROUGH STRATEGIC PARITY WITH THE
US, THE SOVIET LEADERS TURNED TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH WASH-
INGTON AND THE WEST WHICH BORE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ON
THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING THEM: RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS,
THE WIDENING TECHNOLOGICAL GAP, THE CHINA QUESTION, THE
PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR. MOSCOW HAS TAKEN THE
MODERNIZERS' APPROACH TO A SOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS:
LOOKING OUTWARD AND FORWARD. THIS APPROACH IMPLIES
ACCEPTANCE OF THE BURDENS OF A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH
NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS AND EVEN A MEASURE OF INTERNAL
CHANGE. IT INVOLVES RISKS FOR MOSCOW'S "REVOLUTIONARY"
REPUTATION AND MORE CONCRETE RISKS FOR MOSCOW'S LONG-

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TERM CONTROL OVER ITS EAST EUROPEAN EMPIRE. THE DECIS-

ION TO EMBARK ON THE DETENTE PATH AND TO ABANDON THE POLICY OF ECONOMIC AUTARKY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN EASILY TAKEN BY THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP. NOR CAN IT BE EASILY REVERSED.

3. WE THUS HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING ADDITIONAL, MUTUALLY USEFUL TIES. DEEPENED ENGAGEMENT IN ALL FIELDS -- STRATEGIC, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL -- COULD ENLARGE THE STAKE OF EACH SIDE IN AVOIDING CONFRONTATION AND BROADENING THE PROSPECTS OF GLOBAL PEACE.

4. ASPECTS OF THE ADVERSARY AND COMPETITIVE RELATIONSHIP WILL CONTINUE. THE SOVIET UNION IS DETERMINED TO PLAY OUT THE ROLE OF A GLOBAL POWER WITH GLOBAL INTERESTS. THIS WAS ILLUSTRATED DURING THE CURRENT MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, WHEN MOSCOW SEEMED WILLING TO PUT DETENTE WITH THE U.S. AT RISK FOR THE SAKE OF PROTECTING AND ADVANCING SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE AREA AND ASSURING CO-EQUAL STATUS WITH THE U.S. IN DETERMINING THE AREA'S FUTURE. THE MIDDLE EAST SEEMS TO THE SOVIETS AN APPROPRIATE STAGE FOR SUCH INTENSIVE EFFORTS FOR SEVERAL REASONS. IT IS STRATEGICALLY LOCATED NEAR THE USSR AND ASTRIDE THE MILITARY AND COMMERCIAL YOA ROUTE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE FAR EAST. IT PRESENTS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNTERING U.S. OBJECTIVES AND SPLITTING THE WESTERN ALLIANCE. HEAVY SOVIET INVESTMENTS -- ECONOMIC, MILITARY AND POLITICAL -- HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE THERE. THUS BOTH FOR REASONS OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND SUPER-POWER PRESTIGE, NO SOVIET LEADERSHIP COULD LIGHTLY ABANDON SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOR THE SAKE OF BENEFITS OF DETENTE WITH THE U.S., WHICH SOME SOVIETS REGARD AS SLOW IN RIPENING AND PERHAPS ELUSIVE. THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP, WHILE TAKING SOME RISKS, HAS TRIED TO AVOID A CLEARCUT EITHER-OR CHOICE, AND HAS UTILIZED THE ARGUMENT THAT DETENTE HELPED EASE THE CRISIS.

5. OUR INTERESTS CLASH ELSEWHERE AS WELL. MOSCOW'S HEGEMONIC POSITION IN WESTERN EUROPE MUST BE AN ARTICLE OF FAITH FOR ANY SOVIET REGIME. THE USSR WILL STRIVE TO

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MAINTAIN A STRONG MILITARY POSTURE IN CENTRAL EUROPE, INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE AND WEIGHT IN WESTERN EUROPE AS THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE DIMINISHES, AND INHIBIT THE POLITICAL AND ESPECIALLY THE MILITARY EVOLUTION OF THE COMMON MARKET. IT WILL SEEK TO CONTAIN AND OVERSHADOW CHINA. PERHAPS THESE SOVIET OBJECTIVES, ALL OF WHICH TOUCH ON OUR INTERESTS, CAN BE MODERATED THROUGH DEEPENED INTERACTION WITH THE WEST, BUT THEIR BASIC

THRUST PROBABLY CANNOT BE CHANGED IN THE SHORT RUN.

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6. IN AREAS OF MORE DIRECT U.S.-SOVIET CONTACTS,
WE ARE STILL TRYING TO SURMOUNT SOME OLD PROBLEMS
WHILE COPING WITH NEW ONES:

A. IT WILL NOT BE EASY TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT
MOMENTUM WITHOUT INGENDRING FURTHER CONCERN AMONG OUR
VITAL ALLIES AND PARTNERS. THE PROBLEM IS FURTHER COM-
PLICATED BY THE NEED TO AVOID ALARMING MOSCOW OVER OUR
GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA.

B. THE INTENTIONS OF BOTH SIDES WILL CONTINUE
TO BE TESTED IN SALT, MBFR, AND CSCE. ALTHOUGH THE
NEGOTIATIONS ARE TAKING PLACE IN SEPARATE FORUMS, THEY
ARE INEVITABLY INTERRELATED AND MUST YIELD RESULTS
THAT BUILD, RATHER THAN ERODE, CONFIDENCE THAT THE
SECURITY INTERESTS OF ALL ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

C. AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS TO REMOVE US TRADE
DISCRIMINATION. WHILE THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP SEEMS TO BE
PREPARING THE GROUND FOR COPING WITH INTERNAL CRITICISM
IN THE EVENT ATTAINMENT OF MFN STATUS IS POSTPONED, A
CUT-OFF OF EX-IM CREDITS WOULD CONSTITUTE A SUBSTANTIAL
SETBACK WHICH BREZHNEV WOULD FIND EVEN MORE DIFFICULT
TO RATIONALIZE.

D. IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, DISCUSSIONS OF MAJOR
ECONOMIC PROJECTS ARE APT TO MOVE AT A DELIBERATE PACE.
TO AVOID DISILLUSIONMENT, THE SOVIETS MUST BE MADE TO
UNDERSTAND THAT SUCH PROJECTS WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON
THEIR PROFIT YIELD FOR PRIVATE FIRMS AND INVESTORS.
A MORE OPEN FLOW OF INFORMATION FROM THE SOVIET SIDE WILL
BE ESSENTIAL TO FAVORABLE DECISIONS. IN ANY CASE, SOVIET
OFFERS OF PROJECTS EXTENDING OVER 20 TO 50 YEARS IS

A DISTINCTLY NEW ELEMENT. AS THE US LOOKS TOWARD ITS

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FUTURE NEEDS FOR RAW MATERIALS, SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO DELIVER NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES OVER LONG PERIODS OF TIME ON MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TERMS MAY BE ATTRACTIVE FOR ECONOMIC AS WELL AS FOR POLITICAL REASONS. BUT SUPPORT FOR THE ARAB OIL BOYCOTT MAY GIVE FRESH AMMUNITION TO THE STRATEGIC ARGUMENT AGAINST U.S. DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET ENERGY SUPPLIES.

E. TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION IS NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE FUNDAMENTALLY IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY AHEAD. WHILE WE SHOULD NOT REFRAIN FROM SPEAKING OUT ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES, WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT INTERNAL SECURITY IS AN EXCEEDINGLY DELICATE MATTER FOR ANY SOVIET REGIME AND ESPECIALLY FOR A REGIME WHICH IS ENTHUSIASTICALLY EMBRACING DETENTE WITH THE WEST. SOME IMPROVEMENTS HAVE ALREADY RESULTED FROM SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO TAKE SOME INTERNAL STEPS TO ADVANCE DETENTE (E.G., ON JAMMING AND -- EVEN DURING THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS -- ON JEWISH EMIGRATION). THE SOVIETS CAN PROBABLY BE PERSUADED TO DO MORE, SO LONG AS THE PRESSURE COMES PRIMARILY FROM PUBLIC OPINION AND IS NOT APPLIED CRUELY BY GOVERNMENTS. AND IMPROVEMENT WILL CONTINUE TO FLOW NATURALLY FROM INCREASED CONTACTS. BUT WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT THIS SOCIETY TO CHANGE VERY MUCH NOR VERY FAST.

7. FINALLY, A CAUTIONARY NOTE. THE LOGIC OF DETENTE AS MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS FOR THE TWO NUCLEAR SUPERPOWERS MAY APPEAR TO BE INESCAPABLE. THE DOMINANCE OF THE MODERNIZERS IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP MAY SEEM COMPLETE. BUT IS ALSO CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED THAT THERE ARE FORCES HERE WHICH COULD BE RALLIED TO TRY TO SWING THE PENDULUM BACK ONCE AGAIN. THEY INCLUDE THOSE WHO FEAR FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM IF WESTERN IDEAS PENETRATE; THOSE WHO WOULD BE EAGER TO USE NUCLEAR PARITY AND SOVIET CONVENTIONAL MIGHT FOR PURPOSES OF POLITICAL BLUFF; AND THOSE WHO ASPIRE TO CLIMB INTO THE SEATS OF POWER USING ANY MEANS AT HAND. WE DO NOT HEAR MUCH FROM THESE FORCES NOW, AND CANNOT JUDGE HOW POWERFUL THEY ARE. BUT ANY SIGNIFICANT SETBACKS TO BREZHNEV'S POLICY WOULD PROBABLY FIND THEM URGING SOVIET REACTIONS WHICH COULD ARREST FORWARD MOVEMENT TOWARD DETENTE AND EVEN TURN IT BACK FOR

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A PERIOD OF TIME.

8. YOU MAY WISH TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO EE POSTS AS
CONTRIBUTION TO DISCUSSION.
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Message Attributes

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